



VOLUME XIII

CHRISTMAS ISSUE

DECEMBER 1993

A Memory that is Close to The Stomach

By Terry Bilancio

The holiday season is here again! We gather with friends, with family, to celebrate, to enjoy, to reminisce. The family joining together at the holidays always brings me memories of the past assemblages of the common heritage we carry on, and particularly, the food.

For me those special occasions are associated with special foods. Or is it that special foods are associated with certain special occasions? Consider the quail of the duck, which I have spent a lifetime seeking!

In about 1950 Grandmom Clarinda Bilancio moved into our home at 90 Eggerts Road. (The reason was never clear to me. It was only a short time.) My keenest memories of her extended visit all relate to our duck Quack-Quack. Quack-Quack being a duck, loved water. He would waddle off for nocturnal ablutions and trysts with migrating mallards in the pond across the road. As the glow of dawn began revealing these activities to probing eyes, Quack-Quack would waddle home, quacking progress as he went.

Grandmom uncovered Quack-Quack's well-concealed secret(s). She quietly watched the peripatetic fowl's diurnal wanderings and determined that they frequently were into the honeysuckles toward the creek. Close inspection revealed a secret cache of DUCK EGGS! Quack-Quack was not a he; Quack-Quack was a she. You can be sure that Grandmom knew what to do with those jumbo, jumbo eggs!

Then, one sad morning, Quack-Quack's early morning voicing was absent. A search of the grounds found Quack-Quack lying at the base of a front-yard maple. She had her head tucked under her wing as if asleep--but it was obvious that she had been struck by a car. Tears flowed! Quack-Quack disappeared!

And then, miracle of miracles, several days later she was resurrected. Grandmom presided over the ritual, weeping (of sadness or of joy?) as she stirred heavenly-flavored duck meat in the iron skillet. Only squeamish Clothilda refused to join our family's Quack-Quack remembrance dinner that day.

I have travelled the world over, in every country I visit sampling that culture's duck cuisine. Nowhere have I found the marvelous flavored method of preparation duplicated. What was Grandmom's secret ingredient? Was it the tears? Was it the love? Whatever it was, this man can't find it, even in a cookbook.

In this way, at the holiday season I remember special dishes, and the special people who lovingly introduced them to me.

A Special Deal For La Vigna

About ten years ago La Vigna was born: the fulfillment of a dream for some, a challenge and an opportunity for others, a source of entertainment, information and socializing for all of us. Today, as always, La Vigna teeters on the brink of insolvency. Again it appeals to the La Vigna family for support.

At this time, some donors have offered to match any contributions up to \$10 each that are sent to this family newsletter before the end of January. This unusual offer is made as a memorial to Louis G. Bilancio (1916-1983) in recognition of his promotion of better understanding and celebration of our Italian heritage and culture.

Lou Bilancio pursued this promotion with the vigor and joie de vivre that he brought to every cause he espoused. In his final years he became a leader in the Italian American community of Trenton, helping to reestablish the Festa de Cassandrino and working for the state-wide coordination of Italian American organizations. This family newspaper, founded soon after his death, reflects the spirit of his commitment to our family heritage and to our ethnic heritage.

Readers of La Vigna, please take advantage of this opportunity to double the value of your contributions. Help La Vigna by remembering Lou Bilancio.

MY COUSIN PAT

by Connie Picasci Vista, CA

What prompted me to write about my cousin Pat?

All the beautiful articles I read and reread in LaVigna with great pride and sentiment. What a tribute to a great man and what a blessing to have been related to him and through him to be related to Jane and her family.

It is so hard for me to even begin to recall all the beautiful memories we had while growing up. Pat was always someone special: a brother my sister Marion and I never had. God let us have him for awhile and when He was ready for him, He called him to be reunited in a world we know nothing about, only that we will all see one another again.

I would like to share with you an incident that happened while Pat was on leave from the Army he served with such pride. He made "jello" and I could not believe it! We never had jello. I said to him, "I didn't know you knew how to cook?" He smiled and answered, "Oh, yes, I can, and it's good, too! And it was good. I can't remember if we drank the liquid or let it "jell" first!

Pat, you will be missed by everyone. I will miss the talks we had whenever I was "home". You made everything seem right--I truly hope that in my small way I did the same for you.

Jane, you have a special place in our hearts. Pat and you were a perfect "match", not only in matrimony, but in life itself.

OUR BROTHER PAT

by Pat's sister Lena (Esposito)

I thought it only fitting at this time of the year to remember our brother Pat. I saw the first Christmas tree lit up yesterday and it seemed to be telling me those lights were blinking for Pat. As I said before, God picked this time of the year to take him so when we see lights at Christmas it will be a reminder for everyone.

It seems he was taken so quickly from us. I only regret I never got a chance to say goodbye. The Lord was good in one way, he didn't make him suffer. The Lord took our Mom the same way--quick. I never got to say goodbye.

Well, if anything, we know they're in the same place.

We didn't need this holiday to remind us of Pat. I think of him pretty often. He was not only a brother, but a real friend and good listener to every one of us. We'll always miss him and love him.

I don't want to leave Jane out. WE LOVE YOU, JANE.

LETTERS TO MY DAD: PASQUALE J. CHIANESE

by Mary Lynn Nazzaro

During this past year, I have found comfort in writing letters to my father. Of course, when my Dad was alive, I rarely ever wrote to him. It was so much more enjoyable talking with him face to face. I thought I would share some of my writings with all of you.

Every hour, if not every day, my thoughts are of you.

I think back when I was a little girl, the excitement of your arrivals home after a long day at work. Our dog, Laddy, jumping all over you and all of us hanging all over you, too. Occasionally the music would be blaring and since it was never Dean Martin, country or swing, you'd say, "Turn that stuff down," or you'd just walk over and turn it off. You just couldn't understand how we could listen to that "junk" as you called it. Then, oh dear, how often we would hear those words "publicity, publicity" which meant there were too many lights on in the house.

Many of my memories are small personal notes, but they remind me of you each time they come up. Such as your glasses that were always crooked on your nose and smudged. Now, when I sit in my bedroom watching TV with my smudged and crooked glasses, I think of you. Then, of course, my legs and knees--definitely your gift to me. Another reminder is my eating style. I remember you always seemed to have food on your face. One of us always had to remind you if you had potatoes on your nose or salad dressing on your mouth. Dan is always telling me, "You need to wipe your mouth, Mary Lynn." Yes, definitely Pat's daughter here. I always loved it when we were all eating dinner together. You'd tease me about how I would take my helping of food and forget about passing it on. Needless to say, the person to the right of me would be waiting while I would be wolfing my food down. You would laugh and laugh.

Yes, I miss that laughter, your smile and hugs, your wisdom and occasional visits and calls.

Dear Friend,

Once again LaVigna, our family news-notes, provides us the opportunity to send you our holiday greetings and review the past year.

Last Christmas was shadowed by the sad occurrence of the death of our much-loved Pat Chianese on Dec. 20, 1992. The following issue of LaVigna was dedicated to him.

1993 succeeded all too well in being memorable. In March came the Blizzard of 1993. Everything north of the Mason-Dixon Line was closed down for several days. Bernice and I returned from Florida just in time to experience it. Bad timing!

Then came the miracle of 1993: the PLO and Israel shook hands and declared peace!

In September the great floods of the Mississippi and its tributaries overflowed the levees and river banks, devastating cities and towns and surrounding farmlands. Hundreds of inhabitants and volunteers filled thousands of sandbags, working feverishly day and night to contain the rushing waters from their homes and properties. But in vain.

The final catastrophe came in November when thousands of acres in Southern California were destroyed in the worst forest fires of the century. Fire storms rained burning cinders upon the homes of millionaires and more modest abodes. Those with cedar shingle roofs burned to the ground. We all welcome 1994, thankful for a new year.

Last winter we spent January and February in Florida and on a Caribbean cruise. On New Year's Eve we will be celebrating in an Amtrak car-train sleeper and start the new year in Florida. We hope to enjoy our activities in a warm climate, returning early spring. Our LaVigna birthday calendar will keep us informed of your special day, so we will be wishing you a happy birthday.

Corinne is happily teaching English in Copenhagen, but arranges to visit us two or three times a year. We visit her in the spring--when Tivoli opens!

Our love to all of you. May you truly have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Give us a thought once in a while.

Lew Bilancio

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Claudia & Brent Schutts
Daniel & Marylynn Nazzaro
Alfred & Lena Esposito
Theodore & Marea Dumbauld
Jane & Katherine Chianese
Terence & Willie Bilancio
Connie Picascia

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ARTICLES AND TIME

Terry Bilancio
Marea Dumbauld
Connie Picascia
Lena Esposito
Mary Lynn Nazzaro
Lew Bilancio
Leo Chianese
Cheri Candelori
William Bilancio
Clora Aquaviva

MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE STAFF OF LA VIGNA!!!!

THE GAMES WE PLAYED

by Leo Chianese

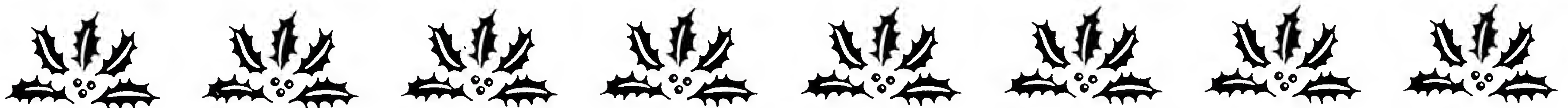
RELEASE THE PUTTER was a game in which there were two teams. The members of one team would have to catch the members of the other and confine them in an area called "prison" or "putter." The putter was guarded by a team member to prevent an opposing team member from releasing his teammates by running through the putter. The guard was supposed to catch the so-called releaser before he ran through the ring. This game lasted for hours, so members even went home for supper and were never found or caught and all would then quit.

KICK THE CAN was a game where one person was "it". He had to locate all the other kids in the game. While he was looking in one direction calling out the name or names of the one he spotted, another kid would come up behind him shouting "kick the can." He then kicked the tin can, everyone scattered and hid. The "it" person would have to start all over again locating the kids.

BUCK, BUCK, HOW MANY HORNS ARE UP? was a game of two opposing teams. They would choose which team would be down first. The team would use one member as a "pillow" who would stand with his back against the wall. The rest of the team members would bend down one behind the other, leaning against the team pillow. The other team then would hop on the bent over opponents without their feet hitting the ground. After they were all on, the team captain sitting on the bent over team would raise a hand with a number of fingers extended and yell, "Buck, Buck, How many horns are up?" The team captain of the ones underneath would guess the number. If correct, they would reverse places. The pillow member was also a monitor to prevent the "up" team from cheating. Sometimes, when the sun was right, the down team was able to read the shadow of the "horns" on the ground and "guess" correctly.

P.S. by Lew Bilancio: My team did not need the sun's shadow. I had a friend on the other team who would signal the number of fingers showing by sticking the right number of fingers in my side. When I was on top I reciprocated by squeezing her side with the right number of horns.

P.P.S.: Incidentally, we never made an agreement to betray our teams. Once I imagined that she signalled to me so when it was my turn on top I signalled back. That's how it got started.



Dear Family,

It certainly has cooled off since the picnic this past summer. A lot has happened in our part of the world. Bob Candelori is getting married to a girl named Terri Tighe. We are very happy for them. Some of you may remember Terri from the picnic. They are truly a match made in heaven. The wedding is planned for November of 94.

Marea, Ted and Cassidy are moving to New Canaan, Connecticut in May. We bought a house built in 1939, which needs a lot of work but will be great upon completion. Ray Armenti is in the Army; he is stationed in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. He is in the 82nd Airborne and he is also a cook. Ron is going to move to Connecticut with us and help us work on the house while he goes to Podiatry school in New York City. Steve is finishing up at Seton Hall University, and is the assistant coach for the Men's soccer team as well as trying out to be the goalie of a men's professional soccer team. Nick and Mari are working as hard as ever and visiting their children and especially their granddaughter, the new love of their lives.

Besides getting married, Bobby is also working for Candelori Electric. Cristina Candelori is busy working for the State of New Jersey and teaching Aerobic Classes. Cheri is working for Over the Rainbow daycare center. She works caring for children of all ages and she also helps in the kitchen. Erma and Bob are busy as usual and to their busy days now they're helping to plan Bob and Terri's wedding.

Celeste Armenti is living in France and studying there for this semester. She seems to be loving every minute of it. She speaks fluent French and Russian--pretty impressive!. Joe Armenti is in the financial planning business and accounting business--a good person to discuss the money business with.

Tony Armenti is the Principal at Reynolds Middle School. The school educates grades 6, 7 and 8. This is his second year as the Principal there (word has it that it's best to be on his good side). Debbie Armenti is also busy doing her thing and doing it well.

Mary Armenti--the most important part of us, for without her none of us would be here and there would be no article from us in LaVigna--is in perpetual motion, especially during the holiday season. For her it's just more places to go, people to see and things to do.

Well that's about everyone that wanted to be a part of this little article in LaVigna. Hopefully this letter finds everyone well and happy during this festive holiday season.

Love to all, and a very MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Marea Dumbauld and Cheri Candelori

SLEEP-OVER AT SANDI'S

by Lilia (Chianese) Sciscio

Do you remember how exciting it was to sleep over your cousin's house when you were young? I do! I guess I had been doing it for years and years. Here's how I remember it.

We never played outside; there was too much to do inside. Aunt Sue would always be making something great to eat in the kitchen. Sometimes it would be something Uncle Frank had hunted down; something quite unusual, but no matter, it always tasted good when Aunt Sue made it. Uncle Frank would eat tons and tons of macaroni for supper. He had a ritual that I found so interesting: he'd top it off with ricotta. And to drink, he'd pour a little grape juice in his cup (right out of the can) and add water. I thought that was so cool!

Sandi and I would listen to records (she taught me how to slow dance) or color for hours. She had a huge set of crayons, maybe 300 or 400 in the set. OK, maybe it just seemed like 300, but boy, it was big. I never had a set that big, so it was a real treat using them. I used to love the way Sandi colored. She was my older cousin and I loved the way she did everything. You know how that can be. Sometimes we'd watch television at night. We were allowed to eat vanilla ice cream and p-i-s-t-a-c-h-i-o-s--in the living room--WOW! We never had those at our house.

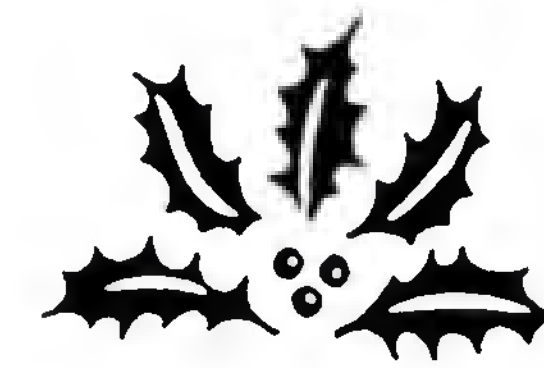
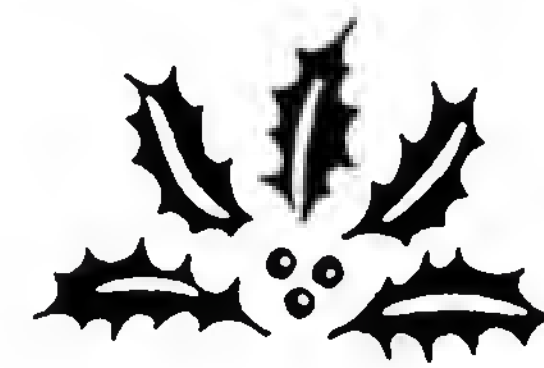
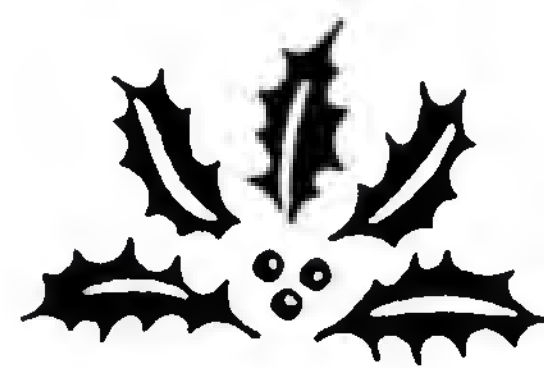
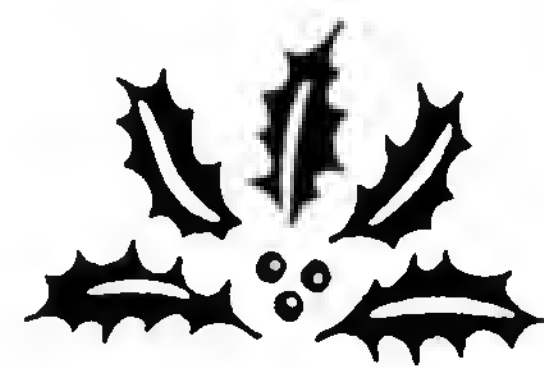
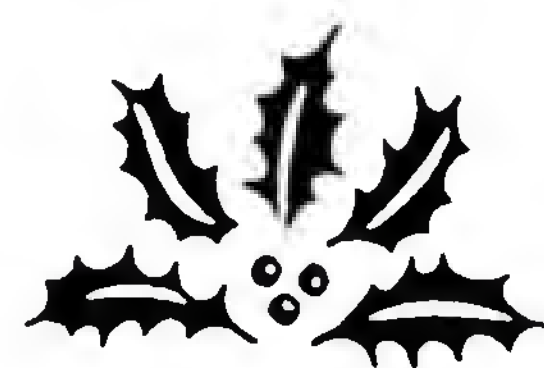
Later we'd lie in bed and talk. And talk, and talk. How did Aunt Sue and Uncle Frank put up with us? While we'd talk, we would lay with our legs and feet up in the air and pass the baton back and forth between our toes. Remember that, San? Finally, very late we'd fall asleep and sometimes I'd walk in my sleep and look for crayons. We were never tired the next day even if we didn't get enough sleep. We were just happy to be together.

The next day would be a Saturday. Frankie (my gorgeous cousin) would be playing the Four Seasons really loud and Sandi and I would dance around. Ralph and Diane would be wrestling around and it was easy to see how in love they were. For breakfast we would have tea and toast. The toast at the Garzios was the best around. Aunt Sue would put margarine on and we would dip it in our tea. I can't see a piece of toast today without thinking of Sandi's house.

Sandi and I spent a lot of our young years together. These were precious years, and lead me to remember a very happy childhood. Sometimes now if I see a picture of her when she was small or I see Laura (Ralph's daughter), who reminds me of Sandi, I see that face and know that I had someone to look up to. Somebody I could count on. She was the sister I never had. We were a real team. Not everyone experiences that feeling. I was one of the fortunate ones.

Now, when my daughter Alicia's face lights up when she sees her own cousins, when she cries to be with them and longs to sleep over their houses, I just look at her and smile. I know how she feels. Because it's always more fun at your cousin's house. They do things just a little differently there than you do at your house.

Thanks for the great memories!!



Letter to The La Vigna Staff

Dear La Vigna:

As a contributor to La Vigna I want to say that I congratulate you and your staff for continuing to publish an excellent family periodical. However, I must say that I was disappointed when that most-skillfully written highly polished, well-edited and extremely personal remembrance of Cootie the Killer Cat and his mild (not wild) mistress Beatrice appeared without the by-line of its most talented and modest author.

As the grandfather of the Blizzard Baby, I must also request acknowledgement that Avery Lee does indeed have a Paternal grandmother Willie Pugh Bilancio who also happens to be the mother of Willie Bilancio. (Willie did accompany me to Italy and Paris. Her leg broken in the Dolomites slowed her not at all. Only the impatient Frenchman who tried to run her down as she limped jaywalking across a four-lane highway perturbed her in Europe.)

La Vigna, keep up the good work! If you have enough paper, you might also consider including masthead to give yourselves credit for your hard work.

Terry Bilancio

MARCH 1994 GATHERING?

For some time there have been suggestions made that we should have a midyear get-together, when we could celebrate and eat together. All those interested in celebrating the arrival of Spring in March 1994 should call either the Acquavivas at 609)882-2448 or the Immordinos at 609)882-7138 before February 1, 1994.

THE ACQUAVIVA-MONTAGUE FAMILY WISH EVERYONE A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

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